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ABSTRACT

In an effort to support the public schools' initiatives to develop effective schools for all students, particularly those who are work bound, the College of Education at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University instituted a graduate program aimed at preparing collaborative instructional leaders. The major goal of the program was to develop a team of instructional leaders from academic, vocational, and special needs subject areas that would collaborate in new approaches to teaching and learning for workbound students in their schools. A group of four faculty representing the areas of secondary, special needs, vocational education, and school leadership formed a cooperative partnership in Fall 1995 to plan and deliver the program. A Master's program was developed that would be delivered off campus. A common curriculum with flexibility to pursue either a Master's degree in curriculum and instruction or vocational and technical education was prepared. The proposed program was shared with the superintendents of schools and their staff responsible for the academic, vocational, and special needs programs in the local school division. A group of 46 teachers representing 8 local school districts were chosen to participate. The first phase of the program was aimed at building collaborative team skills and a knowledge base about work force preparation programs, academic course content, and educating special and diversified student populations. Two additional phases were planned. (YLB)

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COLLABORATIVE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP FOR WORKFORCE PREPARATION OF YOUTH

A Summary of a Presentation

given by

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A major challenge for schools today is the improvement of learning for all students seeking entry into rapidly changing workplaces that require the use of higher levels of skill and knowledge. In making a successful transition from school to work, high school graduates will need increased levels of competence in mathematics, sciences and communication skills to complement their occupational skill preparation. New teaching-learning strategies are needed to improve the qualifications of students for the demands of the changing workplace. Vocational, academic, and special educators can no longer be prepared to serve secondary students in isolated settings with primary emphasis on content unrelated to real work settings.

Research on effective schools (Murphy, J., et. al., 1983) suggests that several factors interact with each other to produce good schools for all students. These are: (1) strong administrative leadership, especially in the areas of instruction and curriculum; (2) a safe and orderly environment; (3) high expectations in student performance and an emphasis on mastery of skills; (4) regular and systematic monitoring of student performance; (5) a systematic and broad based system for students, and (6) strong community support. In order to develop an effective school, Purkey, et. al. (1983) concluded:

> "The new school climate must develop over time as people begin to think and behave in new ways. The process is not mystical or terribly complex, but it would seem to demand an organic conception of schools and some faith in people's ability to work together toward common ends."

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

In an effort to support the public schools' initiatives to develop effective schools for all students, particularly those that are work bound, the College of Education at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University instituted a graduate program aimed at preparing collaborative instructional leaders. The major goal of the program was to develop a team of instructional leaders from academic, vocational, and special needs subject areas, that would

collaborate in the new approaches to teaching and learning for workbound students in their schools.

A group of four faculty representing the areas of secondary, special needs, vocational education and school leadership formed a cooperative partnership in the fall of 1995 to plan and deliver the program. An intact masters program was developed which would be delivered at an off-campus location within driving distance of participating schools. A common curriculum with flexibility to pursue either a masters degree in curriculum and instruction or vocational and technical education was prepared to serve the needs of the teachers enrolling in the program.

RECRUITMENT and SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

The proposed program was shared with the superintendents of schools and their staff responsible for the academic, vocational and special needs programs in the local school division. A meeting was held in the fall of 1994 and attended by 101 teachers and administrators from Southwest Virginia. The meeting was held to: (a) receive comments and reactions to the proposed masters degree program and (b) ascertain the level of interest in participation in the program. An overwhelming response was received from the school divisions, with over 80 educators attending the information sharing meeting. The results of the interest shown and discussion of the participants indicated quite clearly that there was a high level of commitment to proceed with the program.

After the meeting, team applications to participate in the program were completed and forwarded to a selection committee composed of College of Education faculty and educators familiar with the schools in the region. The application and review process gave priority to a team of teachers representing academic, vocational and special needs teachers. In addition, teams who identified a desire to integrate their instruction and had indications of support from

their principal and other business and community organizations received highest priority. A total of 11 teams from 10 school divisions and one community college comprising 76 teachers submitted an application. After careful deliberation and discussion, a group of 46 teachers representing 8 local school divisions were chosen to participate in the program. These school districts are: Bristol City, Washington, Smyth, Wise, Buchanan, Russell, Tazewell and Lee counties, located in the southwestern region of Virginia. The selected teams received strong letters of support from their superintendents of schools and high school principals.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM

The program began in January of 1995 with the first in a series of courses being offered at the Southwest Virginia Center for Higher Education located in Abingdon, Virginia. The first phase (1995-1996) of the program was aimed at building collaborative team skills and a knowledge base about workforce preparation programs, academic course content, and educating special and diversified student populations. The second phase (1996-1997) will involve teams of teachers learning how to plan and integrate their instruction, using computer technology to deliver and manage instruction, and evaluating the outcomes of an integrated teaching and learning process. The knowledge and skills used in the second phase will be used by the instructional leadership teams to develop a series of integrated learning activities and projects which will be implemented during the third phase of the project. During the third phase (1997-1998) the school based projects will be presented and reviewed by a local steering committee composed of the building principal, central office administrators and community representatives from business and industry. A faculty team from the College of Education will also be providing on-site support and assistance in the implementation and evaluation of the integrated instructional projects. Each leadership team will be preparing a portfolio of their

MASTERS DEGREE PROGRAM
for
COLLABORATIVE INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS PROGRAM

Phase I
1995-1996
18 Semester Hours

FOUNDATION

- Foundations of Vocational and Technical Education
- Collaborative Leadership
- Secondary School Curriculum
- Education & Employment for Diverse Populations
-

Two courses in Teaching
Subject Specialization

Phase II
1996-1997
6 Semester Hours

DEVELOPMENT

- Strategies for Informative Instruction
- Computer Applications for Delivering and Managing Instruction
- Assessment of Curriculum and Instruction

Phase III
1997-1998
6 Semester Hours

APPLICATION

- Internship in Education

accomplishments which will be presented at the conclusion of the program to their local steering committees, composed of school and community leaders.

The intact masters degree program is also utilizing an array of instructional technology in its delivery. Each teacher as well as the instructional leadership teams are in constant communication with the faculty team at Virginia Tech utilizing the Virginia Public Electronic Network communication linkage. In partnership with the Southwest Virginia Center for Higher Education, the College of Education is delivering class sessions and team meetings via an interactive compressed video technology system. There are hopes of expanding the video delivery system to several of the other school divisions in order to reduce the extensive travel time on the part of the instructional leadership teams participating in the program.

OUTCOMES TO DATE

Although the collaborative instructional leadership development program is in the initial stages of implementation, it has enjoyed great success in promoting cooperation between the participating local school divisions and the College of Education. The faculty teams in the school divisions and College of Education working together to plan and implement a region wide interdisciplinary approach to instruction. It has been organized and delivered without the use of any external resources and exemplifies a model of resourcefulness in combining the talents and available support to improve the quality of instruction for the often neglected majority of students who enter the workforce upon graduation from high school. The final outcome will be the preparation of instructional leaders who can foster change in their schools quality of students who will have the necessary skills and knowledge to become productive members of the region's workforce.

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